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Committed
15 c. Report

DCI/IC 74-1678
2 July 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: General Graham

SUBJECT: Watch Mechanism

REFERENCE: Revitalizing the USIB Watch Mechanism, 25 June 1974

1. The conclusions and recommendations of the referenced study are exemplary but do not go far enough. The movement toward warning rather than watching is to be encouraged; however, the difference between warning and watching should be clearly understood.
2. Warning is not warning unless related decisions and actions are involved. Watching, on the other hand, implies a passive observation of an event without regard to any decisions or actions on the part of the observer.
3. If USIB really desires to have a warning system, it must first connect the watch function with the function of alerting and focusing collection resources within the intelligence community. By demonstrating sufficient confidence in its own warning process for its own uses, the output USIB warning system will be more credible to the consumer of warning at the policy level.
4. In order to carry out a warning process (or even an effective watch) there must be an ability to aggressively seek information. In any crisis or tension situation there is always the phenomenon of missing or ambiguous information. One cannot sit passively and wait for it. Very often the information exists somewhere in the system but requires action to retrieve and exploit it. In a related case, sometimes the information is not in the system but could be obtained by adjusting the focus of the sensor (in the broadest sense) system. Incidentally, the decisions and actions to adjust the sensors convert a watching process into a warning process, at least at the intelligence level.
5. The report uses the term strategic in relation to warning. This is unfortunate, particularly so because they are using the JCS definition of strategic warning based on the time "before launch". There are so many definitions of "strategic" (level of chain of command, type of weapons, target, etc.) that the term leads to intellectual chaos. A particularly dangerous connotation is that one should ignore "tactical" situations because they have no connection with "strategic" decisions. The recent events (16-26 October 1973) in the Middle East constitute a case in point. The "strategic" decisions were hanging by the "tactical" ground situation.

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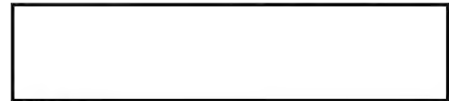
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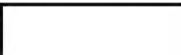
6. Certainly the objective of trying to confine the warning process to those events which could lead to a confrontation of major powers is worthy. Unfortunately it is not easy to attain. Major power confrontations can grow from minor power conflicts--a lesson from hindsight. In foresight, the arena of warning, the task of selection of attention cannot be solved simply by the automatic elimination of watching minor powers, or the elimination of observing protracted local conflict. One must look for a "change of state" (in the physical sense). For example, the watch committee/NIC spent too much time on the everyday activities in Vietnam when the real major warning issues arose from a change of state (e.g., mining of Haiphong) precipitated by ourselves or others.

7. The "change of state" concept relates closely to the report's reference to "temperature". Actually it is the "change of temperature" one looks for as an indicator of a "change of state". The annexes to the report should indicate how the temperature is taken. There are some simple useful means of accomplishing this, which could be the subject of another memo if any interest is indicated.



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